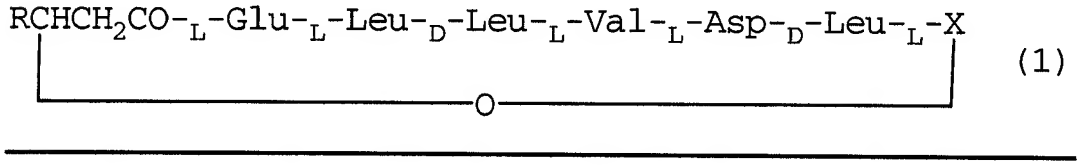
**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1-19 (canceled).

20. (currently amended): ~~The~~A method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition~~ as claimed in claim 11~~, comprising adding (c) a tocopherol compound to an oil-based thickening gel composition comprising (a) an anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure, (b) water and/or a polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more and (d) from 30 to 99% by mass of an oil component being one or more selected from polyoxyethyleneglyceryl ether fatty acid esters and polyoxyethylene sorbitol ether fatty acid esters, and wherein (a) the anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure is surfactin represented by the following formula (1)



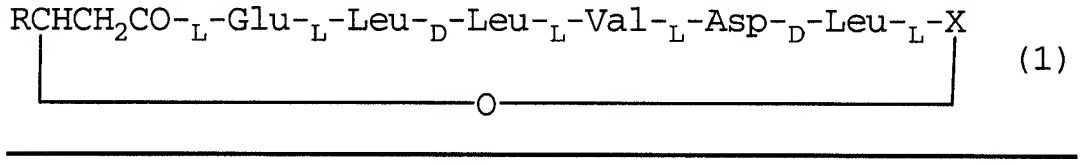

(1)

and/or salts thereof,

wherein R is isoalkyl group having 11 carbon atoms, X is leucine, the polyhydric alcohol is water and glycerin, the tocopherol compound is δ-tocopherol and the oil component is polyoxyethylene (20) glyceryl triiostearate and glycerin tri-2-ethylhexanoate, and

wherein the storage stability comprises preventing separation of the composition.

21. (currently amended): ~~The~~A method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition ~~as claimed in claim 20~~, comprising adding (c) a tocopherol compound to an oil-based thickening gel composition comprising (a) an anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure, (b) water and/or a polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more and (d) from 30 to 99% by mass of an oil component being one or more selected from polyoxyethyleneglyceryl ether fatty acid esters and polyoxyethylene sorbitol ether fatty acid esters, and wherein (a) the anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure is surfactin represented by the following formula (1)




(1)

and/or salts thereof,

wherein component (a) is surfactin of formula (1) in which R is isoalkyl group having 11 carbon atoms and X is leucine, component (b) is water and glycerin, component (c) is δ-tocopherol and component (d) is polyoxyethylene (20) glyceryl triiostearate and glycerin tri-2-ethylhexanoate, and

wherein the storage stability comprises preventing separation of the composition.

22. (previously presented): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 21, wherein the surfactin is sodium surfactin.